



The Ranger Review

Montezuma Castle, Montezuma Well, & Tuzigoot National Monuments

It's All Just a Misunderstanding

By Resource Assistant Sarahanne Blake

What comes to mind when you think of rattlesnakes? Fear? Curiosity? Rattlesnakes have long been feared because of their quick reflexes and harmful venom, but few people take the time to truly understand rattlesnakes. They are an animal to be revered like the rest. They have homes and feelings just as we do. When you come across a rattlesnake, recognize that you are way bigger than that snake will ever be and you just walked into his space. He's probably a bit scared; he'll probably rattle and defend himself, because he's afraid that you might attack him.

Rattlesnakes don't normally attack unless provoked. 50-75% of snake bites are illegitimate, meaning that those people are "asking for it". Young adult males are mostly likely to be bitten because they're the ones harassing the snake or bending down trying to pick it up. They are most commonly bitten on the hands, arms, and face. Ouch!

If a rattlesnake does bite you, there is a list of things to do, as well as a list of things not to do.

What to do:



Western Diamondback Rattlesnake.

- Call 911 and get to the nearest medical facility.
- **Stay Calm.** Just remember that the more you panic, the faster your heart beats and the faster your blood flows, the faster your blood flows the faster the venom moves through your system. This is bad, so stay calm and stay still.
- Remove constrictive clothing and jewelry such as shoes or rings.
- Keep the bitten area below your heart. So, if you are bitten in the hand, keep your arm at your sides.

What **NOT** to do:

- Do **not** suck the venom out. It's not effective and the person trying to suck

the venom out could also get infected with it.

- Do **not** put ice on the bitten area. Venom deteriorates the skin and putting ice on will only increase deterioration of the infected area.
- Do **not** try and kill the snake. He most likely bit you because he was trying to protect himself.

If you come across a rattlesnake, give him respect and enough space and he will surely do the same for you.

Haute-Couture of the Sinagua

By Ranger Sharlot Hart

I started giving a program here at Montezuma Castle. The first time I went out to give the program, many visitors weren't interested. I realized after a while that the problem was how I was pitching it: I'm giving a talk about Sinagua jewelry! Many men convinced their wives to just keep walking. But they were demonstrating the exact point of the program: the Sinagua were people just like us, who valued beauty, and who passed on the things that they didn't like.

The funniest part to me of so many of our male visitors passing by is that one of the more popular styles of jewelry was the nose plug. They were typically worn by men, and although the Hohokam wore them first, the Sinagua really were the enthusiasts; nose plugs never did catch on with the Anasazi. The more valued remnants we have were made with red argillite centers –curved cylinders- and buttons of turquoise on the ends. The Sinaguan men would have had to pierce their septum, and then slip these plugs through...but they end up so big that it's hard to imagine being able to breathe! Although the image of these nose plugs is so consuming, what really

amazes me about the Sinagua and their interests and abilities in jewelry is the time and wealth that went into each piece. Even one little disc bead. Take the image of the person drilling holes in the argillite disc beads. Argillite is a soft rock, yet even so, drilling each hole by hand can take ten minutes. That means that along with all the other work of cutting out the banks and grinding

them to a smooth, round finish you have a whole day's work. How much corn or cloth would a Sinaguan have had to trade for a finished necklace of disc beads?



Today, many of us buy costume jewelry when we don't have enough to trade for 'real' stones or metals, and the Sinagua did a similar thing, so many years ago. They would paint cheaper stones or wood with azurite pigment, to resemble turquoise. When you don't have enough to get 'the good stuff', you make due to get what you value. And what you don't value, doesn't survive. People today are just the same: they may not think nose plugs are in fashion any more, but they appreciation beauty...whatever that means to them.

Sacred Datura: Hazard, Hallucinogen, Healer

By: Resource Assistant Leah Duran

Have you ever drunk coffee, tea, or alcohol? All of the above can alter our physical and mental experiences to different degrees. The idea of deliberately changing the consciousness is universal. In modern culture, various substances- legal and not- are used recreationally, yet in other societies, hallucinogenic rituals were an essential part of cultural fabric. Throughout history, indigenous cultures have looked to plants for otherworldly insight and spiritual knowledge. Sacred Datura, one of the most potent and widespread hallucinogens, has long been revered for its visionary and healing powers. Datura derives from ancient Sanskrit meaning “divine inebriation.”

You might walk by this common plant along the parks’ trails without giving its grey-green stems much notice. Datura reveals its beauty at night when its flowers-large white trumpets tinged with purple- blossom, earning the plant its nickname of Moonflower. A member of the nightshade family, datura contains the toxin scopolamine. The amount of poison- or magic potion-varies widely by species and individual plants. If you plucked a leaf from one plant



The plant Sacred Datura is also called Moonflower because the flower blooms at night. Photo by Leah Duran

and stepped it in tea, the drink could kill you, but if you picked a leaf next to the first and repeated the same process, it might bring desired visions. Though datura is a deadly poison – with fatal doses sometimes as low as 20 seeds – this sacrament can be taken safely by trained shamans who possess intimate knowledge of datura.

Aztec priests used datura to speak with the gods, predict the future, and find stolen objects. Navajos believe datura’s visions can show sacred animals. During the Middle Ages, mixing datura seeds into alcohol was popular in Europe. The brainwave activity of a person under the influence of datura is similar to REM sleep; possibly supporting a theory that datura breaks down barriers between waking and dream images. Aside from

visions, datura also possesses healing properties. Records in India indicate smoking datura leaves helped relieve asthma, while Navajos chewed the dried root during ceremonies to quell fever. Zunis made a poultice from datura to reduce the pain of wounds and bruises.

Curiosity is natural, but the danger of datura is that we have lost the knowledge of how to unlock its secrets. As you admire the flowers, look beyond their surface beauty, because all plants have something to teach us and Sacred Datura is no exception.



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Park Happenings & Funny Pages By Ranger Laura Albert

The Ranger Review is designed to give you more information about what to see and do while visiting our sites. We hope that you enjoy seeing our parks from a Ranger's point of view!

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